Historic, archived document

Do not assume content reflects current scientific knowledge, policies, or practices.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
Radio Service
OFFICE OF INFORMATION

HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT Monday, May 9, 1938

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "TUNA FISH TOPICS." Facts from the Federal Food and Drug Administration, United States Department of Agriculture.

--ooOoo--

Salad days are here again, the skies above are clear again -- and who wouldn't be pleased to hear good news about tuna fish?

For the tuna fish, along with salmon and sardines, is a mighty handy fish to have around the house in the summer time. A can of fish, a jar of mayonnaise, a few stalks of celery -- just a minute and I'll be planning a summer lunch, instead of reading today's letter from the Federal Food and Drug Administration.

This letter takes us to the Los Angeles Station of the Food and Drug Administration, whence comes this news:

"In Costa Rica, at Puntarenas, they've installed a sharp freezer for tuna fish. The freezer is doing good work for consumers, by greatly improving the quality of fish unloaded at canneries in Southern California. At least six tuna clippers, owned by four packers, now deliver fish straight to the freezer in Puntarenas. Then the fish are shipped, by freighters, refrigerated, to San Diego and San Pedro, where they arrive at a temperature of six to ten degrees above freezing.

"The freezer was built by American capital at a cost of $200,000. It has a storage capacity of 500 tons of tuna fish, and it can freeze around 65 tons of fish every day. According to the 'Pacific Fisherman,' this method of handling tuna fish has proven so successful that plans are now being made to install freezers in Hawaii, and the South Seas.

"Looks like a step in the right direction," comments our Washington reporter. But knowing how she likes to travel, I suppose any plan, leading to Hawaii or the South Seas, would be, for her, a "step in the right direction."

"As you probably know," quoting today's report, "our supply of canned tuna fish comes largely from the warm waters of the Pacific, off the coast of Central America and Mexico. Most of the fish are caught a thousand miles or so from the canneries, which are located in a very small territory in southern California.

"Canning has now become almost a year 'round job. The fishing boats go out prepared for a 30-day cruise; equipped with radios and Diesel engines, refrigerating plants and plenty of ice. Ice is very necessary on a fishing trip that may last from three to six weeks. As soon as the hold is full of tuna, the boats make full speed ahead for the canning plants. If the ice does not hold out, all the fish on board will be ruined.

"Last year's tuna pack was the largest ever produced -- more than 2,800,000 cases. Each case holds 48 cans. Since the fish are caught so far away from shore, inspection at the cannery is very important. California maintains State inspectors. and their work is supplemented by that of the federal inspectors.

"Of course all tuna fish imported from Japan, Mexico, and Russia are subject to inspection by federal port authorities. A great deal of imported frozen tuna fish, for canning, enters the port of Los Angeles.

"Now, referring again to canned tuna fish, here are some practical items for homemakers: There are three distinct classes of market tuna -- White-meat tuna. which is scarce and expensive; light-meat tuna, the standard market product; and Tonno, spelled T-o-n-n-o, the Italian-style pack. The cans are generally marked as containing 13, 7, or 3 and one-half ounces of food. The Pure Food Law requires that the cans be as full of meat as practicable, with only enough oil and salt added to give a suitable flavor. (Tuna fish are always canned with a small amount of oil, usually cottonseed, and a small amount of salt.)

"Now let's go back to the three classes of tuna fish. The first includes the scarce and expensive white-meat tuna. Only one fish can properly be labeled 'White Meat Tuna,' and that is the Albacore. You may see labels reading 'White Meat Fish,' or 'White Meat of the Bonito,' or 'White Meat of Yellow-Tail.' When you see these labels, don't be misled into believing that you are getting white meat tuna. If it's not labeled tuna, it's not tuna.

"To comply with the Pure Food Law, a product labeled as tuna fish must be prepared from one of these four varieties of fish: the Albacore or Long Finned tuna; the Blue Fin or Leaping tuna; the Yellow Fin tuna, and the Striped tuna. Fish known as Bonito or Bonita, and Yellowtail or Amber fish, cannot be called tuna fish at all, but must be sold under their own names.

"The term Tuna and the term Tunny (T-u-n-n-y) mean the same thing. Tonno, as I said before, is used to describe a special Italian-style pack of tuna. The word Tonno on a label means that the fish in the can has been packed in olive oil, usually with more salt. This same thing is true if the product is labeled 'Italian-style tuna'.

"To summarize, I'll repeat these important facts for consumers: Only genuine tuna can properly be labeled tuna. Read the label on the can, to know for sure what kind of fish you are buying, and how much the can holds. Cans are generally marked as containing 13, 7, or 3 and one-half ounces of fish. The Pure Food Law requires that the cans be as full of fish as practicable, with only enough oil and salt added to impart a suitable flavor."

****